

PREACHING CHRIST
LECTURE 7
ORGANISATION (2): THE PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

In this lecture we will take some of the principles of organisation introduced in the previous study and put them into practice. We will look at various practical ways of organising our sermons.

1. Nouns

Perhaps the easiest and most obvious structure is based upon the subjects in the verse or passage being studied.

Example: "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Lk.15:6)

- i. The sheep's lostness
- ii. The shepherd's love

Example: "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head" (Lk.7:44ff).

- i. The sinner
- ii. Simon
- iii. The Savior

2. Adjectives

The preacher may also use various adjectives to describe a person, an event, or an occasion in the text.

Example: "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Ex.32:26).

- i. A clear question
- ii. An important question
- iii. An urgent question
- iv. A divisive question

3. Verbs

Another approach is to organise the sermon around the verbs found in the text.

Example: "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee" (Ps.84:6).

- i. A reviving
- ii. A rejoicing

Example: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov.28:13).

- i. Covering sin
- ii. Confessing sin

4. Questions

A sermon can be structured around the questions which may be asked of the text.

Example: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found” (Isa.55:6).

- i. What is missing?
- ii. Why should I search for this?
- iii. Where should I search?
- iv. When should I search?
- v. How should I search?
- vi. Who is to search?

5. Imperatives

If a text contains commands, then the sermon can easily be arranged around these commands.

Example: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt.28:19-20).

- i. Go
- ii. Teach
- iii. Baptize

6. Metaphor

The Bible is rich in metaphors and the suggestive imagery can help the preacher form a structure.

Example: “The Lord God is a sun” (Ps.84:11).

Like the sun, God....

- i. Is Hot
- ii. Is Huge
- iii. Is High
- iv. Is Here
- v. Heals
- vi. Gives Happiness
- vii. Hardens

7. Application

Instead of structuring our sermons around our exegesis we can sometimes structure it around our application and support the application with our exegesis.

Example: “And when the Devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee...” (Lk.4:13-14).

- i. Temptation comes to the most holy
- ii. Temptation is a test of faith

- iii. Temptation is beaten by truth
- iv. Temptation resisted is rewarded

8. Emotions

The different emotions expressed by Bible characters may provide sermons headings.

Example: “Why art thou cast down my soul...hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God” (Ps.42: 11)

- i. A Sad Soul
- ii. A Smiling Soul

9. Contrasts

Contrasts abound in Scripture and often provide a ready-made “skeleton” for a sermon.

Example: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isa.57:15).

- i. God is far away in the high and holy heavens
- ii. God is near in the humble human heart

10. Biography

Sermons on Bible characters may be organized around their various experiences.

Example: And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart ...²⁴ Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. ²⁵ And this *is* the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶ This *is* the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. ²⁷ TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. ²⁸ PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:22-28).

- i. His sins/folly
- ii. His scare/fright
- iii. His sentence/future

11. Responses

The different responses of different people to a situation can also structure a sermon.

Example: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come...(Matt.22:2ff)

The responses:

- i. Apathy
- ii. Activity
- iii. Aggression
- iv. Acceptance

Example: Entreat me not to leave thee...(Ruth 1).

- i. A grieving widow
- ii. A leaving widow
- iii. A cleaving widow

12. Cause and Effect

The effects of certain actions and attitudes can be traced to the original causes.

Example: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat.24:12).

- i. Iniquity abounding
- ii. Love abating

13. Moral Principles

The preacher may wish to draw out the moral principles latent in a passage and use these as his sermon headings.

Example: “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt.26:52)

- i. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual (2 Cor.10:4)
- ii. Blessed are the peacemakers (Mat.5:9)
- iii. Whoso sheds man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed (Gen.9:6)
- iv. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord (Rom.12:19)
- v. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk.19:10)
- vi. The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb.4:12)

14. Textual

Sometimes the text will yield an obvious structure.

Example: “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom.6:11).

- i. Reckon yourselves dead to sin
- ii. Reckon yourselves alive to God

15. Past/Present/Future

A number of texts have temporal reference points which can also provide our sermon points.

Example: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:30-31)

- i. The past: Compassion
- ii. The present: Command
- iii. The future: Conclusion

16. Before and After

Related to the previous suggestion is the structure founded upon “before” and “after” comparisons.

Example: “Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl.7:29).

- i. God’s good invention
- ii. Man’s bad invention

17. Causes, Consequences, Cures

The medical approach of cause, consequence, and cure can be used to open up a text and structure a sermon.

Example: “The poor shall never cease out of the land” (Dt.15:11).

- i. The causes of poverty
- ii. The consequences of poverty
- iii. The cure of poverty

18. Question and Answer

A verse or passage may ask and answer a question in such a way that a sermon can be built around.

Example: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors...” (Rom.8:35-37).

- i. Question: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
- ii. Answer: Nothing

19. Pairs

A preacher should be on the look out for “pairs”.

Example: “Enter ye in at the strait gate...” (Mat.7:13-14).

- i. Two gates
- ii. Two roads
- iii. Two destinations

20. Positive and Negative

Truth is often presented negatively and positively.

Example: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim.6:17).

- i. Do not trust in uncertain riches
- ii. Do trust in the certain God

CONCLUSION

These are just some samples of the many and varied structures by which sermons may be organised. You may want to review your own past sermons' structures in order to identify other alternative organising methods. You may also want to use the suggestions in this lecture in order to vary your own approach in presenting the truth.